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District of Arizona
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT TEACHER FOUND GUILTY OF 10 COUNTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- José de Jesus Rivera, United States Attorney for the District of Arizona, announced today that **LEON DON JOHNSON**, age 41, of Wheatfields, Arizona, and an enrolled member of the Navajo Indian Nation, was found guilty of 10 counts of sexual abuse of a minor, by a federal jury, at Prescott, Arizona, on April 20, 2000.

The evidence at trial showed that Leon Don Johnson, an elementary school student teacher in Chinle, Arizona, had been sexually molesting a single minor female from the age of 5 to 14. The victim was not one of Johnson's students. Johnson was found to have committed the crimes of aggravated sexual abuse of a minor on January 16, 1996 and April 1, 1998; sexual abuse by fear on April 10, 11, 12, 14, 18 and 19, 1999; and sexual abuse of a child on April 10, 1999. Throughout this period, Johnson had threatened to kill the victim and a witness if they told anyone about the abuse. On April 19, 1999, Johnson whipped and beat the victim. On that same day, Johnson realized that the victim was going to disclose the abuse and so he donned the costume of a Navajo Skin Walker (a bad medicine man), including coyote and dog pelts, and conducted a ceremony at the location where the abuse had occurred. During the ceremony, a witness overheard Johnson confessing to the sexual abuse of the victim and heard

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him curse the victim, her residence, and the family's truck. Johnson fled the scene that night and was arrested by Special Agents from the FBI in Gallup, New Mexico, on April 26, 1999.

The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Robert C. Broomfield during April 11 through April 20, 2000.

A conviction for Aggravated Sexual Abuse of a Minor in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2241(c) carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine or both; a conviction for Sexual Abuse by Threats in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2242(1) carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine or both; and a conviction for Sexual Abuse of a Minor in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2243(a) carries a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine or both.

The investigation that led to the guilty verdicts was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Navajo Department of Public Safety, the Navajo Tribal Police Department and Arizona Department of Public Safety.

Sentencing is set before Judge Broomfield Monday, August 14, 2000, at 10:15 a.m., in Phoenix, Arizona. The defendant has been in custody since his arrest and will remain in custody until his sentencing.

This case was successfully prosecuted by Frederick A. Battista, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-99-351-PCT-RCB
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